The Power of Art – The life of Mine

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Gargantua (1831) by Honoré Daumier

A lithograph by Honoré Daumier, depicts King Louis-Philippe consuming bags of coins delivered by laborers, representing the heavy taxes extracted from France's poor. Surrounding the king are his favorites, collecting rewards from the contributions of the impoverished. This caricature criticizes the king's extravagant spending and the stark economic inequality of the time. Although it was censored before its intended publication in La Caricature, the piece led to legal action against Daumier and the publisher, resulting in fines and imprisonment.

Lithograph – Brandeis Institutional Repository, Brandeis University

The Burden (The Laundress) (1850-53) by Honoré Daumier

The Burden shows a determined laundress and her child battling against strong winds, symbolizing the struggles of poor working women against greater societal forces like poverty and corruption. Daumier’s use of light and dark emphasizes their plight and resilience. His brushwork reflects his lithographic style, with sweeping lines and an earthy palette, highlighting the woman’s noble struggle.

Oil on canvas – Hermitage Museum

The Third Class Carriage (c. 1862-64) by Honoré Daumier

The Third Class Carriage critiques social hierarchies reinforced in public transportation. The foreground depicts serene working-class passengers, contrasted with the discontented wealthy behind them. Daumier's sketchy, almost sculptural style highlights the dignity of the lower classes versus the pettiness of the affluent. This painting, part of a series reflecting on public transport, illustrates Daumier's ongoing exploration of class and social inequities.

Oil on canvas – The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Broken Eggs (1756) by Jean-Baptiste Greuze

Broken Eggs features a young woman surrounded by broken eggs, symbolizing lost virginity. She is seated with a basket and a young boy attempting to mend an egg, while an older man and woman engage in conversation. The painting's detailed symbolism reflects on morality and the consequences of lost honor, with the boy's actions hinting at deeper, unresolved themes.

Oil on canvas – Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

L'Accordée de Village (1761) by Jean-Baptiste Greuze

L’Accordée de Village, also known as *The Marriage Contract* or *The Village Bride*, presents a domestic scene centered around the execution of a marriage contract. The elderly father, seated on the right, gestures towards his daughter’s suitor while holding a purse of money for the dowry. The man to his left holds the contract paper, while the bride stands beside her future husband, her arm intertwined with his. Her mother supports her other hand and that of her younger sister. Younger children in the room show varying degrees of interest, with some appearing bored or asleep.

The painting premiered at the Paris Salon in 1761 and was met with acclaim for its moral message, depicting a narrative where piety and virtue are rewarded with marital happiness. The work received enthusiastic reviews from critics, including Denis Diderot, who praised its composition and subject matter. The painting’s success helped establish Greuze as a master of genre painting, creating a new genre focused on domestic and moral themes.

Oil on canvas – Musée du Louvre, Paris, France